

6-1987

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Recommended Citation

(1987) "Quint Tyler Guier: My Father," *Jackson Purchase Historical Society*. Vol. 15 : No. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/jphs/vol15/iss1/2>

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QUINT TYLER GUIER: My Father

Martha L. Guier

Born in a log cabin on December 22, 1882, in Trigg County, Kentucky, Quint Tyler Guier lived two months past his 104th birthday anniversary; he died on February 25, 1987, at the Murray-Calloway County Hospital, Murray, Kentucky, of heart failure. The doctor said his heart was just worn out.

He always was a "young" man who kept current on present day events and activities. He missed voting one of the few times in his adult life in 1986 after his first broken hip. He once said that the most important event in his lifetime was seeing Neil Armstrong walk on the moon via television. Some people at the time did not believe this really happened; that it was just something on television—but he believed and was impressed. Once when a small boy he asked his grandmother if there really was a man in the moon. She told him she thought there was. Quite a contrast in concepts during his lifetime.

One time when he was 90 or 95 years old we were riding along the highway and he was commenting on the farming and crops alongside the roads, a usual occurrence. He said, "I was just born 50 years too soon." How he would have liked to farm with modern equipment, methods, etc. Though he originally planned to be a medical doctor, he got caught in the economic crunch of the Great Depression and found himself on a farm inherited by my mother, Lola Brazzell Guier, from her parents, who died in 1924 only nine days apart. He loved the land; was born on the land. In fact, love of land and love of snakes probably were the threads that bound him and Jesse Stuart—they had much in common, including similar teaching experiences.

Education played a major role in his life. He was named for his father's teacher, Quintus M. Tyler. His parents moved the family to Calloway County when he was 16 years old and Calloway Normal College was in the process of being started by Rainey T. Wells. He later attended this college. He and his mother years later moved to Murray in order for their only child to attend Murray State University, also started by Rainey T. Wells.

He attended Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, off and on from the school year 1909-10 through the school year 1916-17. He dropped out periodically to earn money to return for another term or terms. He was not able to finance graduation. A transcript obtained when he enrolled in the Jesse Stuart Creative Writing Workshop shows he attended 10 quarters and had just under 90 quarter hours of credit. Graduation requirements were different at that time and there is no indication as to how much college work he needed in order to graduate.

He taught school for 12 years: at Edge Hill in Calloway County; Jones and Hickory in Graves County; and was principal of Niagara High School in Henderson County, all in Kentucky.

He told me last December that a young man who visited him in the hospital was wasting time that morning. When I asked him what he should have been doing, he replied, "Reading to improve his mind."

He loved to read, and read everything he could get his hands on until macular degeneration of the retina took its toll and he was no longer able to read print. If he had kept his eyesight he would have enrolled in every course at Murray State University. He instilled the love of reading in me. As an only child with few playmates nearby I passed many hours reading; I still do. My mother instilled in me a love of music. If I have a good book or a magazine and/or music I seldom am lonely.

When failing eyesight prevented further reading, he began using talking books and also began writing; and write he did, constantly, with stationery improvised with wider spaces and more distinct lines. As far back as I can remember he enjoyed writing letters and receiving letters. Then after he and my mother moved to Murray to live with me, he finally had time to start writing the Guier family history. Then after my mother's death in 1971, he started attending the Jesse Stuart Creative Writing Workshop. This opened an exciting; new world to him. He discovered that he could write! And that his many experiences were unique and interesting because most people had only heard of them. His short stories and articles were included in the Workshop books from 1972 through 1978. These books were published by Murray State University and included the writing of students from each section of the Workshop. **Fifth Summer**, published in 1975, was dedicated to him and Dr. Marvin O. Wrather.

He had a lifelong interest in his family and in writing. His love of genealogy goes back to listening to his grandmother and other family members tell an 8- or 10-year-old boy information about the traditional history of the Guier family, the tie-in with the Guier family and the Daniel Boone family, and on and on and on. He never forgot those details and could recite dates and events accurately until just shortly before his death.

He made an address at the December program of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society in 1984 at age 102 and stood on his feet for more than an hour reeling off names, dates, ages, places, and events with no notes; he could not have read them had they been there. He had a phenomenal memory.

He was talking to me once a few years ago about his first day of school and asked me if I remembered mine. I did not. He said, "You don't remember things like I do." He was correct; I do not. He further stated, though, that life was much simpler when he was growing up with no radio, no television, no telephone, and not much people contact; therefore special events made lasting impressions on his mind.

He knew directions. I do not and was always asking him which direction we were going when we were traveling. He seldom failed to know even after he lost most of his eyesight.

Until fairly recently he seemed to be ageless. On one of the tours of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society several years ago someone looked around to see if he needed help (he was alone on that trip), and he was not in sight. The benefactor then looked ahead and there he was striding across the rough ground way out ahead of everybody—he needed no help that day! He was at least 90 years old at the time.

He got better as he got older; and told people when he was about 90 years old that he had always dreaded old age, but it was **glamorous**. He wanted very much to live to be one hundred years old, and did, with a celebration in 1982 at the Murray Woman's Club House in Murray, Kentucky. Over 200 people attended. He said after that party that he did not see why he couldn't have a birthday party every year as long as he lived. We did exactly that with the exception of one year when we were visiting his sister and brother-in-law in Florida.

He loved people, loved his family, loved to be "living history", loved to tell stories, and thoroughly enjoyed being somewhat a semi-celebrity because of his longevity and his natural ability at storytelling. He attributed his longevity to the fact that when he was tired he rested, when he was thirsty he quenched his thirst, and when he was hungry he ate.

He was an unusual, unique person who touched many lives in his 104 years and was an inspiration to many people, some of whom knew him only through newspaper publicity. He loved life—told one of his sitters that he hoped God would turn His head and he could slip by and live to be 200 years old.